



In Iowa's Interest:

Giving Thanks— And Giving a Hand to the Less Fortunate

by Senator Tom Harkin

As we gather this Thanksgiving to spend time with our families and to enjoy the bounty of the season, we must also remember the many Americans who struggle to put food on their tables.

It is hard to imagine any family, child or individual in a nation as fortunate as ours going without food, but sadly, that is the reality for too many in our country. According to the Iowa Food Bank Association, hunger affects one in eight Iowans. And according to Jordan Vernoy, who heads the organization, Iowans are also grappling with something he calls “hidden hunger” – those who earn enough to not qualify for federal assistance, but are still struggling to provide for their families. For them, food pantries and local aid groups are a lifeline.

But food banks and non-profit providers are struggling too, as they work to keep up with record demand stemming from some of our country's most protracted economic struggles since the great depression. Just as many families are hard hit by joblessness and reduced wages, so too are the organizations that help these folks straining to keep up with demand, even as contributions are falling.

As the holiday season begins, this is a great time to illustrate the strength and compassion of our community by volunteering time or donating food – a simple act that can make a difference to the less fortunate. There's an old saying: “we make a living by what we make, but we make a life by what we give.” A number of Iowa resources are available. For a list of local Community Action Agencies, please visit <http://www.iowacommunityaction.com/Agency/index.cfm>.

Or, if you are interested in donating food or volunteering, please visit the Iowa Food Bank Association at <http://iowafba.org/>.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful, safe and Happy Thanksgiving.